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Joint Press Release

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APP Forest Clearing in Bukit Tigapuluh Threatens Lives of Local Communities and Sumatra's Endangered Species

Pekanbaru & Jambi, INDONESIA -- The destruction of high biodiversity forest in Sumatra's Bukit Tigapuluh landscape – including the extinction of the endangered Sumatran tiger, elephant, and orangutan- is now in front of our eyes. The Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape is severely threatened due to on going massive clearance and a future plan by the Ministry of Forestry to convert the expired Selective Timber Concession (HPH) through the giant pulp and paper company Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) and its partners.

The Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape, located in Jambi and Riau Province, is one of the last remaining areas of relatively large contiguous dry lowland forest in Sumatra. Five environmental NGOs that work in the landscape strongly criticize this conversion plan. The plan will systematically threaten the habitat of endangered species; environmental services provided by watershed Indragiri and Ratah rivers of Riau and watershed Batanghari and Pengabuan rivers of Jambi; and the livelihood of forest-dependent local communities, including indigenous tribe of Talang Mamak and Orang Rimba.

WARSI, PKHS, Frankfurt Zoological Society, Zoological Society of London and WWF-Indonesia call on the government to take real action in protecting the remaining forest in Bukit Tigapuluh landscape from forest conversion done by APP and its partners.

Natural forests in Jambi have become a new target for APP to source its materials to produce pulp and paper as its conversion activities in the neighboring Riau have been stopped due to a police investigation of illegal logging there.

Inactive logging concession areas in Bukit Tigapuluh forest block have become the target of forest clearance to plant accacia by APP partners PT Arara Abadi of Riau and PT Wirakarya Sakti of Jambi. Both are very expansive in clearing forests to provide material for the pulp and paper industry.

APP partners have cleared about 20,000 hectare of natural forest in part of the Bukit Tigapuluh lanscape, particularly in the area surrounding protected forest Bukit Limau. The forest clearance was done to supply material for pulp production at APP's PT.Indah Kiat Pulp and Paper in Riau and PT.Lontar Papyrus Pulp and Paper in Jambi.

Field investigations done by environmental organizations in Riau and Jambi and released today found indications of illegal logging and logging highway construction by APP and its partners in the location of inactive ex PT IFA and PT Dalek Hutani Esa. The highway has created access for further conversion and sped up the loss of natural forests, while the legality of the highway construction is still being scrutinized. Natural forest clearance has taken place inside and around the protected forests in

Bukit Tigapuluh landscape and in the area that serves as home to indigenous Orang Rimba and Sumatra's endangered species. (See *WWF Investigative Report*).

Conservationists are very concerned by the findings and call for APP and its partners to stop clearance of any natural forest where ecological, environmental and cultural conservation values have not been determined and protected and an end to the sourcing of any wood from such clearances. The groups also call on the government to review its current policy on Bukit Tigapuluh and to better address current threats against the Bukit Tigapuluh ecosystem before it is too late. This includes stopping all forms of forest clearance in breach of national Indonesian laws and regulations.

"With its high conservation values, Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape should be protected and therefore all natural forest clearance in the area has to be stopped," said Ian Kosasih, WWF-Indonesia's Forest Program Director. He called for APP to commission independent assessments of the conservation values of the area in a publicly transparent manner before any conversion take place.

The five conservation groups issued a letter to the Minister of Forestry in 3 September 2007 calling for redrawing the boundaries of Bukit Tigapuluh National Park and protecting Sumatran tiger, elephant, and orangutan habitat around the park and its extension protected forest Bukit Sosah–Bukit Limau.

59 mammal species and 198 bird species -- a third of Sumatra's birds – have been recorded so far in Bukit Tigapuluh landscape, and it is a home of endemic and endangered flora *Rafflesia hasseltii* and *Johanesteima altifrons*. The Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape is also considered by many tiger scientists and conservation experts as one of 20 Global Priority Tiger Conservation Landscapes. Indigenous tribes of Talang Mamak, Orang Rimba and Traditional Melayu are known to settle in Bukit Tigapuluh forests and are highly dependent on the forests for their livelihood.

For further information, please contact:

- Diki Kurniawan (Warsi) : 08127407730 /dicky@warsi.or.id
- Peter H Pratje (FZS) : 08127495815 /phpratje@gmail.com
- Dolly Priatna (ZSL) : 081389001566 /Dolly.Priatna@zsl.org
- Desmarita Murni (WWF) : 08127537317 /dmurni@wwf.or.id
- M. Yunus (PKHS) : 081365705246 /yunus_pkhsb30@plasa.com

Notes for editor:

Full report in English released today "Asia Pulp & Paper (APP) Threatens Bukit Tigapuluh Landscape" can be downloaded at:

http://rafflesia.wwf.or.id/library/attachment/pdf/BTp_Investigation_Jan%202008_draft_FINAL.pdf

WWF Investigative report on recent illegal logging operation by APP can be downloaded at:

http://rafflesia.wwf.or.id/library/attachment/pdf/Illegal_logging_Investigation_Jan%202008_FINAL.pdf